

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): An information recording apparatus for recording multi-leveled information in a phase-change recording medium by the application of a laser beam thereto, comprising:

means for modifying a power level of said laser beam into two or more power levels so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information, and for setting a plurality of recording mark units including therein at least one recording mark to be formed, based on said modified power levels, so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information, said means for modifying said power level of said laser beam further changing at least one of said power levels in a level retention time thereof so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information; and

~~means for applying at least two laser beams having different power levels to form said at least one recording mark, and for varying a power level of one of the at least two laser beams to form the plurality of recording mark units.~~

Claim 2 (Original): The information recording apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein each of said recording mark units has a power level that corresponds to the total area of said one or more recording marks included in each of said recording mark units.

Claim 3 (Original): The information recording apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein each of said recording mark units includes one recording mark and has a track-direction length in a range of 0.5 to 1.0 times a beam diameter defined by $1/e^2$, and the area of said recording mark in each of said recording mark units is changed for recording said multi-leveled information.

Claims 4-5 (Canceled).

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): An information recording and reproducing apparatus for recording multi-leveled information in a phase-change recording medium by the application of a recording laser beam thereto, reproducing multi-leveled information recorded in a phase-change recording medium by the application of a reproducing laser beam thereto, comprising:

means for modifying a power level of said recording laser beam into two or more power levels so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information, and setting a plurality of recording mark units including therein at least one recording mark to be formed, based on said modified power levels, so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information, said means for modifying said power level of said recording laser beam further changing at least one of said power levels in a level retention time thereof so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information; and

means for reproducing said recording marks based on reference clock signals, wherein a timing of detecting a mark edge of each of said recording marks and the timing of detecting a reflection light intensity of each of said recording marks are different.

Claim 7 (Original): The information recording and reproducing apparatus as claimed in Claim 6, wherein each of said recording mark units has a power level that corresponds to the total area of said one or more recording marks included in each of said recording mark units.

Claim 8 (Original): The information recording and reproducing apparatus as claimed in Claim 6, wherein each of said recording mark units includes one recording mark and has a track-direction length in a range of 0.5 to 1.0 times a beam diameter defined by $1/e^2$, and the area of said recording mark in each of said recording mark units is changed for recording said information.

Claim 9 (Original): The information recording and reproducing apparatus as claimed in Claim 6, wherein said reproducing laser beam has a smaller beam diameter than a beam diameter of said recording laser beam in terms of a beam diameter defined by $1/e^2$.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): An information recording method for recording multi-leveled information in a phase-change recording medium by the application of a laser beam thereto, comprising:

modifying a power level of said laser beam into two or more power levels so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information; and

~~applying at least two laser beams having different power levels to form at least one recording mark;~~

~~varying a power level of one of the at least two laser beams to set~~ setting a plurality of recording mark units including therein ~~[[the]]~~ at least one recording mark to be formed, based on said modified power levels, so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information,

wherein in said modifying said power level of said laser beam, at least one of said power levels is further changed in a level retention time thereof so as to correspond to said multi-leveled information.

Claim 11 (Original): The information recording method as claimed in Claim 10, wherein each of said recording mark units has a power level that corresponds to the total area of said one or more recording marks included in each of said recording mark units.

Claim 12 (Original): The information recording method as claimed in Claim 10, wherein each of said recording mark units includes one recording mark and has a track-direction length in a range of 0.5 to 1.0 times a beam diameter defined by $1/e^2$, and the area of said recording mark in each of said recording mark units is changed for recording said multi-leveled information.

Claim 13 (Canceled).

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The information recording method as claimed in Claim 10, wherein said power level of said laser beam is modified into three power levels: a recording power level, an erasing power level, and a bias power level, with the respective power levels thereof being set in a decreasing order of said recording power level, said erasing power level, and said bias power level (said recording power level > said erasing power level > said bias power level).

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): The information recording method as claimed in Claim 14, wherein in modifying said power level of said laser beam, at least one of said recording power level or said bias power level is further changed in [[a]] said power level retention time thereof in accordance with said multi-leveled information.

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Claims 16-23 (Canceled).